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Illinois Kids Will Kick Butts – and Juul – on March 20 *State Leaders Challenged to Fight Skyrocketing Epidemic of Youth E-Cigarette Use*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kids in Illinois will unite against tobacco use on March 20 as they join thousands of young people nationwide to mark Kick Butts Day, an annual day of youth activism sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. More than 1,000 events are planned across the United States (see below for a list of local events).

This year, kids are focused on kicking Juul, the e-cigarette that has become enormously popular among youth across the country.

While cigarette smoking among high school students nationwide has fallen to 8.1 percent, e-cigarette use among high schoolers rose by an alarming 78 percent in 2018 alone – to 20.8 percent of the student population. In 2018, more than 3.6 million middle and high school students used e-cigarettes. U.S. public health leaders have called youth e-cigarette use an “epidemic” that is addicting a new generation of kids.

In Illinois, 13.2 percent of high school students use e-cigarettes, while 7.6 percent smoke cigarettes. Tobacco use claims 18,300 lives in Illinois and costs the state \$5.5 billion in health care bills each year.

On Kick Butts Day, youth and health advocates are calling for strong action to reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic. In particular, they are calling on the Food and Drug Administration, states and cities to ban all flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes in flavors like cotton candy, gummy bear and mango that tempt kids. Other effective strategies to reduce youth tobacco use include laws raising the tobacco sale age to 21, significant tobacco tax increases, comprehensive smoke-free laws and well-funded tobacco prevention programs.

In Illinois, youth advocates are urging state leaders to enact a new law raising the tobacco sale age to 21. The legislature just passed the bill, sending it to Gov. J.B. Pritzker for his signature. Youth with the **Children’s Hospital of Central Illinois in Peoria** will take anti-tobacco pledge cards to the state Capitol in Springfield and meet with their legislators about raising the tobacco age to 21. (Time: 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM. Location: Illinois State Capitol, 401 S. 2nd Street, Springfield. Contact: Kathleen Copelen (309) 363-6429.)

“This year on Kick Butts Day, we’re challenging policy makers at every level to do their part to reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic and continue driving down youth tobacco use,” said Matthew L. Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. “We cannot allow e-cigarettes, especially Juul, to addict another generation and reverse the enormous progress we’ve made in reducing youth tobacco use.”

Key facts about e-cigarettes include:

- The main cause of the youth e-cigarette epidemic is Juul, which looks like a computer flash drive, is small and easy to hide, delivers a powerful dose of nicotine, and comes in kid-friendly

flavors like mango, fruit and mint. According to the manufacturer, each Juul “pod” (cartridge) delivers as much nicotine as a pack of 20 cigarettes.

- E-cigarettes pose serious health risks for kids. [The U.S. Surgeon General](#) has found that youth use of nicotine in any form – including e-cigarettes – is unsafe, causes addiction and can harm the developing adolescent brain, affecting learning, memory and attention. Studies also show that young people who use e-cigarettes are more likely to become cigarette smokers.

On Kick Butts Day, youth join in creative events including signing pledges to be tobacco-free, learning about the harmful chemicals in tobacco products and organizing rallies at state capitols.

In Illinois, additional events and activities include:

In **Flora**, the **Teen REACH Program** will celebrate Kick Butts Day by picking up tobacco litter around the blocks of the Teen REACH Center and putting cups in a fence to display the message “Trash the Ash” to community members. Time: 3:30 PM. Location: Teen REACH Center, 114 E. Washington Street, Flora. Contact: Danica Snyder (618) 925-3350.

Students from **Saint Mary’s School** in **Mount Carmel** will create an anti-tobacco display by putting cups in a fence. Additionally, students will sign a banner pledging not to use tobacco. Time: 8:15 AM. Location: St. Mary’s School, 417 Chestnut Street, Mount Carmel. Contact: Michelle Slunder (618) 263-3873.

Youth with the **Boys and Girls Club** in **Carbondale** will clean up littered cigarette butts in Turley Park to show how environmentally damaging cigarette butts are. The youth will then write postcards to city officials to petition making Turley Park smoke-free. Time: 4 PM – 5:30 PM. Location: Turley Park, 109 N. Glenview Drive, Carbondale. Contact: Brandi Aken (618) 457-8877 ext. 5.

All events will take place March 20 unless otherwise indicated. For a full list of Kick Butts Day activities in Illinois, visit www.kickbuttsday.org/map. Additional information about tobacco, including state-by-state statistics, can be found at www.tobaccofreekids.org.

